REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The undersigned greatly appreciates the courtesies extended by Examiners Justin Larson and Jes Pascua during the personal interview with Mr. Mike Richardson at the United States Patent and Trademark Office on May 25, 2006. The prior art Card, Hartmann, and Solberg patents were discussed during the interview. It was agreed that the primary reference (Card) fails to disclose, teach or suggest the use of a clamp assembly, as claimed, in combination with a ladder rack.

Claims 1-20 in the case are pending. Claims 1-5, 8, and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Card (US 63,468) in view of Meekma et al (US 6,539,758). Claims 9, 11-15, and 18-20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Card in view of Meekma et al., as applied above, and further in view of Stankiewicz (US 5,996,736).

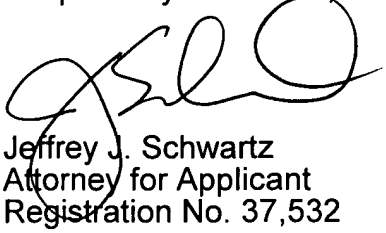
As discussed during the interview, subcombination Claims 1-10 are cancelled herein in favor of amended Claims 11-19 drawn toward the *combination of a ladder rack and clamp assembly*. Specifically, the clamp assembly recited in amended base Claim 11 includes first and second spaced-apart holders adapted for engaging the ladder and the ladder rack, respectively. An elongated gear rack interconnects the first and second holders. A pinion operatively engages the gear rack, and comprises a plurality of uniformly spaced teeth formed along its entire circumference. A hand knob is rotatable about a notional axis extending centrally through the pinion, and adapted for rotating the pinion to thereby move the first article holder along the gear rack relative to the second article holder. A locking bar including a plurality of spaced teeth is adapted for meshing with respective teeth of the gear rack in a locked position. Means are provided for moving the locking bar between the locked position and a released position. In the locked position, the meshing teeth of the locking bar and gear rack cooperate to prevent linear movement of the first holder relative to the second holder, thereby securing the ladder to the ladder rack. In the released position, the teeth of the locking bar and gear rack are sufficiently

disengaged to allow free linear movement of the first holder along the gear rack relative to the second holder.

With regard to the art cited, the Office Action combines Card as a primary reference with Stankiewicz in an obviousness rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). While Card describes a clamp with some structural features similar to the clamp assembly of amended Claim 11, Card does not disclose *a vehicle ladder rack*—the second half of the claimed combination. Stankiewicz discloses a ladder clamp in combination with a vehicle ladder rack, but incorporates a clamp assembly with means and features (dissimilar from that recited in amended Claim 11) for effecting clamping movement and release of the holders. In view of the unique clamp structure of Stankiewicz, this reference could not be readily modified in a manner consistent with Card; nor is there any incentive or motivation provided in the art to do so. In other words, to modify the clamp structure of Stankiewicz based on the teachings of Card goes far beyond that of ordinary skill in the art. Rather, this type of modification would amount to a wholesale reconstruction, or substitution, of the clamp assembly disclosed in Stankiewicz.

For all these reasons discussed above, Applicant submits that all of the claims in the case are now in condition for allowance. Such action is therefore respectfully requested at an early date. If the Examiner believes that issues remain for discussion, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,



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